



Childhood obesity must be treated outside home, and well as within

By Other Voices

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I read with interest your Dec. 4 editorial ("A weighty issue parents must face") on Senate Bill 210. I want to offer an alternative approach that is comprehensive and systemic.

The obesity epidemic is likely a result of multiple factors that collectively influence dietary and exercise practices. Such influences include families and communities, schools, health care settings, media and communications, and work sites. These channels are recognized by the Institute of Medicine and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation as recommended strategies to prevent obesity. Thus, our approach to preventing the epidemic is to include *all* these channels working together to create opportunities where the healthy choice is the easier choice. This is the public health approach.

This is a tall order, to be sure, but one that demands our response grounded in system-wide approaches that include all the channels noted above where we apply the best evidence available. SB 210 is one of multiple approaches through multiple channels to prevent childhood obesity, and the BMI measure is just one metric. Advancing, as you have, that families are more important than schools diminishes and fragments our approaches to this public health challenge. Further, families, schools and public health are not discrete entities; they should and can function together.

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